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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

Annual Visitation 17

OF THE

Lord Bishop of WINCHESTER,

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A N D O V E R,

In the County of SOUTHAMPTON,

SEPTEMBER 14th, 1737.

By FERDINANDO WARNER,
Vicar of WHITCHURCH in HAMPSHIRE.

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M.DCC.XXXVIII.

S E R M O N

Preached at the

Annual Visitation

of the



N A O N E R

In the County of Southampton

BY THE REV. J. W. GARDNER, M.A.

Curate of the Church of St. Mary, Southampton

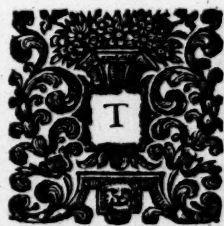
L O N D O N
Printed for T. WOODWARD, at the Half-Hen between
the Portico and the Theatre in Pall Mall

M.DCC.XXXIII



MATTH. V. 14.

Ye are the Light of the World.



THAT our blessed Saviour might answer the Intention of his Coming into the World, and justly deserve the Title and the Character of the *Messiah*, he pursued those Measures, both in his Doctrine and Example, which were, in the exactest Manner, calculated to make his Mission useful to Mankind, not only at the Time in which he lived himself, but to all the distant and succeeding Ages of the World.

IN this admirable and comprehensive Sermon upon the *Mount*, in which he taught and promulgated the Doctrine of his Religion, there are some Passages which evidently confirm this Observation; and which, tho' intended for the Instruction of all sorts of Christians, yet have a more peculiar Propriety when applied to the Sacred Apostolic Character.

OF this sort are the Words before us; and, as our Saviour's Directions are of a Moral Nature, conducing to the Peace and Comfort of Mankind, so we may reasonably conclude, that they not only concern'd the First and Inspir'd Teachers of his Religion, but that they are likewise to be extended to all who should hereafter propagate and advance it.

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THERE is no Doubt but that in the Metaphor of *Light*, which he has made use of, he intended to express the chief and most essential Part of their Employment, and to include in it every amiable and every useful Virtue;—whatever was requisite to adorn and complete their own Lives and Characters, and to make them serviceable and advantageous to the World.

AND, indeed, the obvious Interpretation and Import of this Title, may convince us that he appointed those to whom he gave it, to make it their solemn Business and Endeavour to diffuse Knowledge and Instruction amongst all whom they should converse with; and by their exemplary Behaviour in their several publick Stations, to make the Encouragements to Virtue, and the Motives to Good-manners, evident and conspicuous in the midst of a dissolute and corrupted World.

AND as this was the Design of the great Author of our Religion, when he first gave Commission and delegated the Apostles Messengers of his Gospel; so it may very well consist both with the *Occasion and the Words before us*; to consider the Duty of the Teachers of Christianity, with respect to those Instructions which they are to dispense unto Mankind; and what sort of Measures and Conduct they must pursue, to recommend it to the World in the way of Life and Manners.

In the First Place, WE are to consider what sort of Instructions the Teachers of Christianity are to dispense unto the World, as Men appointed by its Author to be a *Light* to others in it. In the Fullness of Time, when the *Jewish* Superstition, and the *Gentile* Ignorance and Impiety, had made a new Revelation of the Divine Will expedient, in which their natural Notions of Worth and Imperfection, Right and Wrong, might be restor'd; then was the Messiah sent, by divine Appointment, to reveal to those who had forfeited God's Favour, the Terms of his

his Acceptance; and to preach Remission upon a Repentance of their Sins;—to reveal, That whosoever would imitate his Example, and obey the Precepts which he deliver'd; whosoever would return to the Practice of Religion in its natural and true Simplicity, the proper Love of God and one another with Sincerity and Truth; that these should obtain the Favour and Forgiveness of the Almighty, and be finally rewarded with everlasting Happiness. It being thus evidently one of the chief Intentions of our Saviour, to revive in Mankind their genuine and original Notions of Religion, lost, it was very apparent, in the gross Superstition of one sort of Men, and the total Depravity of another, we may conclude, that it is the Business of the Teachers of his Gospel, to inculcate such Doctrines as are of undoubted, indispensable Obligation, as are either reasonable in themselves, or, by their Institution, have a Tendency to mend the Heart and Temper.

IN pursuance of this Design, the Christian Dispensation, it must always be acknowledged, is excellently calculated; and, as the primary End of it is to persuade us to renounce and put away our Vices, reform our Minds, and, by that Means secure our present and future Happiness;—the Happiness of the Poor, the Weak and the Unletter'd, as well as of the Great, the Learned and the Wise; so it is necessary that the Doctrines which are taught us, in the Name, and under the Sanction of Christianity, should all of them be plain and easy of Apprehension, without any uncertain or any doubtful Explications. Besides this, we are to consider, that when the Deity hath thought fit to reveal himself to the World, and to discover those Articles which are of the utmost Importance to the Happiness of Mankind; it is a Contradiction to suppose, that they should still remain obscure and hard to be understood; or that he has not laid open and made manifest to all Men, whatever Truth is necessary that all Mankind should know.

THIS is surely an Observation which every one must have made, as being extremely plain and evident in itself; but which, however, may be deduced from the Tenour of our Saviour's Preaching throughout the Gospel, where, instead of any abstruse and unintelligible Questions or Opinions, which terminate in Speculation only, he has given us a Set of Precepts which concern the Heart and Practice; — an Institution full of Wisdom, and every way accommodated to universal Use, to the meanest as well as to the highest Understanding.

AND indeed, when we consider that the Wisdom of God could not probably aim at any other Design in communicating himself to us, than to inform us in the Nature of Good and Evil, and to place Life and Death before us, that our Behaviour and our Choice might be well directed; it will appear an Absurdity to suppose, that any Part of a Revelation, coming from him directly, can propound Doctrines either repugnant *to*, or merely resting *in* the Understanding, as Articles of Faith which are necessary to Salvation, and much less Doctrines which have an evil Tendency.

ONE of the Apostles has assured us, that the chief Intention of that Religion which is descended down from above, and which is revealed and authorised by the Almighty, is particularly to promote the Peace and the Purity of our Lives: Nay, it is evident, that our Lord himself came certainly to reform the Errors which produced the Vices of Mankind; and all the Doctrines which he has given us, and all the Articles which he has proposed to our Faith, were originally designed, and ultimately tend to improve the Minds and Manners of his Disciples.

AND as such is the Nature and Design of those Instructions which are to be met with in our Saviour's Gospel; so he has given us an invariable and unerring Rule, whereby we may discover the Value and Importance of any Principles in Religion, in an *Allusion* to the Judgment which
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we make of a Tree by the Fruit which it produces; and which, *with some little Variation*, may serve for an Illustration of the Point now before us. As the Fruits of a Tree appeal to a Sense which is common to all Men, so the Doctrines which are of real and universal Obligation, appeal likewise to a moral Sense, equally common, and in the Frame of Nature: And as the Fruits which have no Taste, but appear only to the Eye, the Smell, or Touch, cannot therefore possibly be approved by the Palate, or are not proper to be applied to it; so the Doctrines which are only curious or philosophical, as they appeal not at all to the moral Sense of Men, but to quite different Faculties, so it is plain that they have no religious nor moral Obligation. How very natural a Consequence is it from this Allusion, that the *chief and important* Part of the sacred Character consists in recommending, with the greatest Seriousness and Fervency, the Truths which have a Tendency to moralize the Life and Temper of Mankind;—to inculcate those Laws and Maxims of Behaviour, which become our Relation to God and to one another; and in which consists the Excellence and the Perfection of our Nature!

THE Gospel, we must allow, has for many Ages past been planted amongst us; and therefore the Business of its Teachers seems now to be more limited, and in a much narrower Compass than when it was at first to be promulgated and established in the World. It is not so much to inculcate upon *Christians* the Reality and Advantages of our blessed Saviour's Mission, the Idolatry of the *Pagan*, or the Defects of *Jewish* Worship, as continually to enforce the Precepts of Christianity upon the Consciences of Men, to improve them in the Practice of real Inward Holiness; and, by making them like the Deity, who is consummate Goodness, to fit them for the Enjoyment of immortal Happiness.

THE whole Tendency of those Instructions which our blessed Lord has given us, as it has already been taken notice of, and as it will still further appear by considering the Scheme of Duties which he has enjoined us; the Duties of a *Positive* as well as those which are of a *Moral Nature*; this is evidently to purify and adorn human Life with the Virtues suitable to our Make and Composition; and, instead of filling Mens Heads with Notions, which may rather confound than convince their Understandings, to fill their Hearts with good Affections, and to bring them to Repentance, and a better Mind.

WHOSOEVER will recollect these admirable Instructions, and make their Observations on them with this View, will perceive, that instead of dark and idle Speculations, hard to be understood; or which, if ever so perspicuous, have no moral Influence; instead of subtle and mysterious Systems of Tradition, irreconcilable with Probability and human Apprehension;—all which were too notorious amongst the *Jews*;—instead of these, our blessed Saviour has only recommended, in the most elegant Simplicity, the Laws of Truth and Righteousness;—what only conduces to make us easy within ourselves, kind and charitable to one another here, and happy with the supreme Intelligence hereafter. They will perceive, that the whole Design of our blessed Saviour's Ministry was to promote the universal Happiness of Mankind in the constant Exercise of Virtue; and that, instead of provoking them to mutual Animosity, Bitterness and Strife, upon the Score of different Opinions about the Circumstantials of Religion, he has not so much as concern'd himself with any such Externals, but has only recommended, with great Strength and Beauty, the Virtues which adorn and perfect Human Nature.

INSTEAD of any such Endeavours as will serve only to inflame the Passions of Mankind, and to stir up their Resentments because of a different Apprehension, though
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in Matters of the last Importance; instead of any Attempts to overthrow the Natural or the Civil Rights of Men, or of encouraging any particular Factions in Religion, we must acknowledge, that our blessed Saviour has, on the other hand, requir'd us to imitate God's Perfections in an universal Regard to the whole rational World, and enjoined us the Practice of Love and Charity, as the Bond of Peace and Virtue.

THERE are so many Instances to be given of our blessed Saviour's Precepts, which have this only Tendency; and it is so evident throughout his Gospel, that he came not to destroy, but to preserve the Exercise of Benevolence in its utmost Latitude and Extent, that one must be extremely ignorant of the whole Tenour of his Institution, not to perceive it calculated to promote, as much as possible, the Dispositions which make us useful and agreeable to one another.

It is so far from giving Countenance to the use of any temporal Severities and Discouragements for not believing right, or from favouring any cruel or compulsive Methods in the Propagation of his Religion, that we find many express Directions to the contrary; and that he seems to have left the Truth intirely to itself, to make its own way, without any such Assistances, which are so opposite to the Views and Influence of Religion. For, when some of his Disciples were for bringing Fire from Heaven, to avenge them of the *Samaritans*, whose Opinions in Religion had occasion'd some Rudeness and Incivility towards his Person; our Saviour, who came not with Judgments to compel, but with Gentleness to persuade Mankind, rebuk'd with some Vehemence this ill-directed Zeal, by telling them, they knew not what manner of Spirit they were contending for; that they had mistaken the Temper and Disposition of Mind which he intended to promote and inculcate in his Gospel; and which was directly contrary to any such malignant and envenomed Spirit: That the

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Qualities which he chose to recommend in his Institution, were, on the other hand, Forbearance, Meekness, and Good-will; and that there was no Method more effectual of shewing their sincere Obedience to the Almighty, than by an impartial Regard, without any little Distinctions, for all their Fellow-Creatures, even as for themselves.

AND now, if such is the Nature, the Tendency and Design of all those Instructions which Christ himself hath published; if his whole Intention was to secure the Practice of Religion in the Life and Temper of Mankind, and to persuade them to those amiable and engaging Dispositions, which are so much the Ornament and Perfection of our Nature; then hence we may be convinced of the Duty of the present Teachers of Christianity, with respect to those Instructions which they are to deliver to the World, as Men appointed by its Author, to be a *Light* to others in it. It may convince us, that it becomes those who have taken upon them the Name and the Profession of his Ministers, to have no other End in view in the publick Lessons which they inculcate, but that for which our Saviour came down from Heaven, and dwelt upon this Earth; and to make their whole Doctrine subservient to the Interest of Truth and Righteousness.

THE Methods of carrying this Design into execution with a Probability of Success, are, without doubt, to be learned from the Nature of those Subjects which our Lord himself insisted on; and which, it has been just now observed, were such as had an immediate Influence upon the Life, in adjusting the several Passions and Affections of the Mind to the Pursuit of proper Objects, and so conducting us to the discharge of our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and Ourselves.

AND therefore,—To teach a rational Obedience and Submission to the Almighty, as the wisest and best of Beings, and the great Director and Disposer of Events, from whom alone our Life and all our Comforts are derived;

rived; to recommend the highest Esteem and Veneration of his Perfections, and the most absolute Dependence upon his Care and Providence as the Governor of the World; to persuade Men to the Exercise of Friendship and Benevolence, and the Dispositions which make us Just, Forgiving, Kind and Useful; to enforce Meekness and Humility, Temperance and Chastity, with the several particular Branches of our Duty, which Christ hath taught us in his Gospel; and for the better Security of the Practice of these Virtues, to obviate those Pretences whereby Men excuse an Attendance upon the Means and Instruments of Religion. This seems to be the Province of the Messengers of Truth; and this alone to be the Business of all those Instructions which the Teachers of Christianity are to deliver to Mankind.

It remains therefore now that we consider, in the *Second Place*, What sort of Measures and Conduct they must pursue, to recommend it to the World in the way of Life and Manners.

AND here, in this Point, it is likewise necessary, that we may keep clear of all Objection, to draw our Observations from the Behaviour of the great Law-giver himself; whose Perfections, indeed, it is not for Mortals to aspire to, but whom it is the Glory of their Conduct to imitate and resemble, as far as human Frailties will permit them. And though our Saviour's own Deportment was in all respects answerable to the Doctrines which he taught the World, and there was no one Virtue which now becomes a Christian, or a Man, which was wanting in his Example; yet we must allow, that what strikes and engages our Attention most in a Review of his personal Conduct, is a thorough Inoffensiveness and Humility on the one hand, and an universal Benevolence and Usefulness on the other.

THE *Jewish* Scribes and Doctors had always been remarkable for a Love of Superstition, and an external Holiness; and because they succeeded *Moses* and the Prophets in being Teachers and Expounders of the Law of God, they had requir'd an implicit Attention to their Instructions, and a sacred Regard and Veneration for their Character, when, at the same time, they were notorious for a Neglect of Moral Discipline, the Duties which are of infinite and eternal Obligation. Though it was very plain that they impos'd the Precepts of the Law in the severest Sense and Rigour upon other Men, and added even their own Traditions to make it burdensome; yet there was nothing of it which could ever be discerned amongst themselves, but only in those Works which were to be seen in publick, which belonged to them as sitting in the Seat of *Moses*, or which would give them the Pre-eminence and the Character of holy Men.

BUT our Saviour, who had an Aversion to these wicked Usurpations over the Consciences of one another, having caution'd his Disciples against their Pride and Vanity in delighting to be called *Guides* and *Rabbies*; and having, on the contrary, injoin'd them not to contend for Superiority and Precedence, but to condescend with mutual Charity and Respect; so, to enforce these Precepts, he gave the greatest Instances of Humility in his own Behaviour upon all Occasions that came before him; and by the unaffected Meekness and Lowliness of Mind, which he discover'd thro' the Course of his own Ministry, most powerfully recommended the Practice of these Virtues, to those who should at any Time take upon them the Office of Teaching in his Name. He has even expressly commanded that they should learn this particular Disposition of him; and there is no doubt but that the Airs of State and Grandeur, which were too often practis'd by the Priests among the *Jews*, must necessarily be a Weight upon the Usefulness of those, who were to propagate a Religion directly
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contradicting the Ways of Pride and Haughtiness. And indeed the whole Turn and Bent of his Conversation amongst those who treated him with great Contempt and Insolence, may convince us, that he intended by his own good Example, to banish the Dispositions which obtain'd so much amongst them, to the Bane and Prejudice of Mankind.

WHOSOEVER will recollect some of the most conspicuous Incidents in the Life and Conduct of our Saviour, will perceive, that what he seems to have laid the greatest Strefs upon, and what, by his own Behaviour, he peculiarly enforc'd on those who then attended him, was an Integrity of Manners, without any Guile or Dissimulation; an honest Plainness and Sincerity of Heart, diffusing Benevolence and Good-will, and the greatest Forbearance and Gentleness of Nature, amidst the injurious Treatment of corrupt and foolish Men.

IN the whole History of his Life and Actions, as it is given us by the sacred Writers, there is not one Instance to be met with, of his exercising any malicious or revengeful Disposition, subservient indeed to the Views of Cruelty and Ambition, but which is plainly destructive of the Peace and Happiness of the World: And instead of confining the Virtues of his Conduct within the narrow Bounds which Interest or Artifice might suggest, we find him using his Opposers with the utmost Clemency and Condescension, and with the greatest Mildness of Persuasion endeavouring to bring them over to the Truth. Though there were many insolent Attempts to bring his Person and his Doctrine into Contempt and Ridicule, yet he only desir'd to oppose Truth to Falshood, Religion to Imposture, and never exercis'd a Power which he could most certainly have made use of, to silence such daring and impious Infidelity. He was, in a particular manner, careful, throughout every Part of his Conduct, to avoid any intermeddling with temporal or civil Matters, as what in no

fort related to the Business of his Mission, but was rather inconsistent with the Sanctity of his Character, as a Teacher of Truth and Righteousness.

As it was easy for him to perceive, that Superstition and Enthusiasm, the Forms and External, instead of the Life and Virtues of Religion, would always receive Countenance in weak and vitious Minds, so he was therefore very solicitous to avoid giving Encouragement to any Formality and Preciseness, which might have a Tendency to promote it; and, by the Freedom of his Conversation, endeavour'd so much to stop the Progress of it, that he was even suspected to be a Libertine himself by the Devout amongst the *Jews*, and accused with associating, in great Familiarity, with Publicans and Sinners: For he not only behav'd himself with the greatest Affability towards those who had embrac'd the Christian Dispensation, and who entertain'd him with the highest Marks of Esteem and Hospitality; but with regard to those who were licentious, and who never gave themselves the Trouble to inquire about Religion, there was no overbearing Treatment, no Insult, Scorn, or Calumny made use of.

AND yet, this Humility and Gentleness of Nature, this amiable Integrity and Inoffensiveness of Behaviour, great as it appears to be, was equalled by a Benevolence and a Good-will to all Men, put in practice as often as the Wants and Wishes of every one he met with gave him an Opportunity.

A VERY short Appeal to those sacred Writings which testify concerning him, will convince us, that doing Good was not only the End of his Coming into the World, but was likewise the whole Business and Employment of his Life, from the first Period of his Usefulness to the last Hour of his Incarnation. There is no one who has ever read his History in the Four Gospels, but must necessarily have made this very Observation; and that no Difference of Nation, Interest, or Religion, was ever brought into Con-

Consideration, when there was an Occasion for his Assistance to the Bodies or the Souls of Men.

THE *Jews* indeed were govern'd by these inconsiderable Distinctions in the Exercise of their Friendship: They even violated the Laws of Nature towards those who had not the same Opinion, and the same Zeal with them: They maintained it to be unlawful to converse with any who were not externally very pious; but to be much more unjustifiable, to have any Commerce or Acquaintance with those who were of another Nation: But, quite the contrary to all this,—Our Saviour's Design being to promote the Peace and Happiness of the World, and the chief Law of his Institution being the Law of universal Love, so he shew'd the most disinterested Regard, in his own Behaviour, to the general Tranquillity and Well-being of Mankind.

THERE is an Instance in his Example of the great Sense he had of Humility and Benevolence, and how much it was his Desire that they should be the distinguishing Characteristicks of the Preachers of his Religion; and which, as it is plainly to the present Purpose, it may not be improper to relate. When he found his Hour approaching, in which he was to depart out of this World, and return to his Father, who had sent him, this being the last Time of eating with his Disciples before his Death, in great Humility, and so as to leave a lasting Impression of his exemplary Kindness and Good-nature on their Minds, he rose up from Supper, and, after the Manner of the *Jewish* Servants, prepar'd himself to wash and clean their Feet. When this Ceremony was finish'd with the greatest Condescension, he then resum'd his former Character and Apparel, and address'd them in the following Manner: “ Though you all acknowledge me to be of infinitely greater Dignity and Authority than yourselves; though “ you call me your Lord and Master, and pay me the Veneration and Regard of such; yet you may perceive that “ I have

“ I have perform’d, with great Chearfulness and Pleasure,
 “ the meanest and most servile Office: And therefore, if
 “ you are sincere in your Imitation of my Example, and
 “ your Observance of my Precepts, how much more
 “ ought you, with all Readiness and Good-will, to con-
 “ sult each other’s Happiness, who, in Comparison of me,
 “ are all of you really but Equals and Fellow-servants?
 “ I have here set you a Pattern of Humility and Assistance
 “ to my Inferiors; I have, by this Instance, made it appear
 “ of how much Importance to my Religion is the Prac-
 “ tice of these Virtues; and, to shew you that it is of the
 “ utmost Consequence to your Happiness, I must observe
 “ to you, as a farther Recommendation, that if it is not
 “ the Disposition and the Temper of your Minds at pre-
 “ sent, and if it does not appear in your Conversations
 “ to be habitual and sincere, it is in vain for you to ex-
 “ pect the Felicities of that State which I am now with-
 “ drawing to;—the Pleasures of which await, and will,
 “ in a great measure, depend upon the Attainment of that
 “ humane and engaging Disposition which accompanies the
 “ Exercise of what is called Humility, Friendship, and
 “ Benevolence.” In short, the whole Series of our blef-
 sed Saviour’s Conduct was, in all Respects, becoming the
 Author of a Religion design’d as an Improvement upon the
 Law of Nature; and which must therefore necessarily in-
 culcate the Practice of Humanity, as the great Principle of
 Action, without which all Society whatsoever must be
 miserable. And now, if our Saviour’s Example was so
 illustrious by the constant and invariable Practice of these
 Virtues; if what chiefly distinguish’d him as a Preacher
 of real Righteousness, was an inoffensive Deportment,
 full of Gentleness and Humility, and a careful Attention,
 from a Principle of Benevolence, to the Wants and Infir-
 mities of Mankind; then hence we may be convinced,
 what sort of Measures it is the Duty of the Teachers of
 Christianity to pursue, that they may recommend it to the
 World

World in the way of Life and Manners. We may learn, that they should not only endeavour, as much as possible, to shew in their own Lives the Advantage of every Virtue which they enforce upon other Men, but that principally as the Ministers of the Religion of Jesus Christ, that great Exemplar of Meekness and Simplicity, they should be eminent for the Practice of a thorough, unaffected Gentleness of Nature, void of Pride and Dissimulation; and an uniform Intention, of Usefulness and Good-will, which every way adorn and recommend a Christian.

THE most obvious Characteristick of the Religion which our Saviour taught us, as appears from a Review of all his Precepts and Example, was the Love of Mankind in its utmost Latitude and Extent; and if those who profess themselves the Ministers of this Religion, would have it thought that they are in earnest, and would really persuade Men of the Truth of what they say, it must certainly be necessary to shew, in the Peace and Purity of their own Manners, that they believe it themselves to be a true Institution; requiring from its Professors an habitual Conformity to the Rules which it prescribes them. It must certainly become those whose Province it is to teach the Virtues of Christianity, as Things that are essential to the present and the future Happiness of Mankind, to give them all the Advantage possible, by the most conspicuous Exercise in their own Lives and Temper; and to let the World see, by an evident Demonstration, what an Ornament to Nature is the Spirit of this Religion, and how very amiable the Christian makes the Man.

HAVING taken this View of the Instructions and Example which the Teachers of Christianity should exhibit to the World, as Men appointed by its Author to be a *Light* to others in it, there remains nothing more at present but to *improve these Reflections*, in a way that may
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be of Advantage to those, for whose Use the Occasion now before us will justify their being confin'd.

AND if it cannot but be acknowledged, that, according to the Christian Principles, a true Description has now been given of the Business and the Office of the Ministers of Christianity, there can then be no occasion of any Arguments to persuade them, of how much Importance to the World, and to the whole Order itself, is their acquitting themselves decently of the Duties of their Station, by leading Men in the Knowledge of the Practice of Religion.

THEIR whole Errand, it is very evident, is to inculcate such Virtues as not only conduce to procure the Felicities of a future State of Being, but which, at the same time, are necessary to secure the Peace and Welfare of Community: And as they have all desirable Opportunities to promote Knowledge and Inquiry, and to cultivate the Dispositions which make Men Wise and Good; so, whilst they are thus employing the Power which the Nature of their Office gives them, and in this glorious Pursuit of doing Good to others, their Abilities and their Learning are exerted, it must be own'd that they are of eminent Service to Mankind; and instead of being the Pest and Incumbrance of Society, as they have so much of late been invidiously represented, they will then have a Right to the utmost Respect and Reverence from the People, and will not be more desirous to assert their Claim to it, than others will be to acknowledge and support it.

FOR, whilst it is the continual Endeavour of so large a Body of Men as the present Christian Clergy, by a Course of such Instruction and Example as has been mention'd, to teach and illustrate the Love of God and one another; and, by the Motives peculiar to the Christian Doctrine, to enforce the Beauty of Virtue, and the Deformity of Vice, it is impossible but that Society must reap great Advantage from it; in general, Order must necessarily be promoted,
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Iniquity must be discountenanc'd, Peace and Honesty must flourish, and Truth and Love prevail.

WHILST the whole Design of their publick Teaching is to persuade Men to imitate the Perfections of God, and to renounce those Sins and Follies which Nature and their Passions have too favourably entertain'd; whilst, instead of leading Mankind into the Errors of any particular and disputable Opinions, they confine themselves in teaching the Institution of our Saviour, and rather than insist upon the Original and the Sacredness of their Office, they recommend the divine Authority of Jesus Christ, and the internal Character and Amiability of his Religion, they must surely be of Weight and Consequence to the World, without Envy and Contempt from any one who is not an Enemy to Mankind; and, by promoting the Dispositions which make Men love each other, must gain Esteem themselves.

BUT further, whilst their Behaviour may be look'd upon as an Evidence of the Truth of what they say; and they manifest that Humility, Gentleness, and Forbearance, so conspicuous in the Religion which they profess themselves the Teachers of; whilst they prefer Benevolence, and doing Good, to the Views of Interest and Ambition; and by their own Example, endeavour to promote the Peace and Tranquillity of the Publick, it cannot be but that their Influence must necessarily be discerned in the Increase of Truth and Righteousness; and, corrupt as the World is, and however loth to own it, that the Institution must be of the highest and most important Service.

FOR, if they value themselves only for the Usefulness of their Character, and spend their Zeal about the Duties instead of the Titles which attend it, there is no one but will acknowledge that they act a wise and honest Part: And as all Men are ready to reverence, according to the Measure in which they see another virtuous, and willing to do Good, so, for one of this Order, whose Morals are corrupt and dissolute, to talk

of his sacred Profession, and the Sanctity of his Character, is the most likely Method which he can possibly make use of, to bring Religion and its Ministers into the most absolute Contempt.

BUT surely, to be appointed to conduct our Fellow-creatures to the Attainment of their present and their future Happiness, without any of the Names and Ornaments which bear it Company, is a great illustrious Character: And whilst the Clergy thus employ themselves, and make the Salvation of Mankind of much more Concern to them than the Pursuit of Power and Riches, it is placing their Character in the most amiable Point of View, and cannot fail of procuring them as much Respect as a good Man can wish for, or a wise Man will pay.

THERE's need of nothing to enhance and add a Lustre to this Dignity from the Qualifications which secular Powers can confer; for the Honour of the Function depends intirely on themselves; and he who teaches and lives like a Minister of Jesus Christ, whose Instructions and Example are thus evidently calculated to promote the Peace and Holiness of Mankind, tho' his Place, in this Order, should be the lowest that is possible, is yet full as considerable, and as real a *Light of the World*, as he who is invested with the most pompous State and Title: For the Credit, the Reverence, and the Success of Christ's Disciples, who had not so much as the Countenance of Authority to support them, were derived merely from a Doctrine worthy of the Wisdom and the Counsel of the Most High, and from a Behaviour exactly suitable to the great Importance of their Commission.

AND as long as those who succeed them in this Office will continue the same Precepts, and the same good Demeanor, full of prudent Condescensions to the Wants and Weaknesses of their Fellow-creatures, they must necessarily recommend themselves with great Advantage to the World; and notwithstanding such Humility, need be in
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fort of Pain about the Dignity of the Priesthood, which may be very much advanc'd indeed, but cannot possibly suffer by such Management.

AND therefore, to conclude, — Whatever Reproaches are cast upon the whole Profession, without any Distinctions, can never be applied with any sort of Propriety to those who thus adorn their Doctrine and Conversation by a Resemblance of the Copy which Christ himself hath set them. These are Things which may have taken their Rise indeed from the Absurdities which have been taught, and the Vices which have been practis'd by some who have assum'd this Character; (and where is there a Profession without weak and wicked Men belonging to it?) but being thrown out at random upon a whole Order of Men, whose Institution appears founded on the best and wisest Reasons, instead of fixing Ridicule where it is so indistinctly pointed, they must rather bring Contempt upon those who propagate and encourage such Malevolence: And though it may be reasonably presum'd, that the greater Part of this Body, by their own good Sense and Virtue, will be secure against the Scorn which usually attend Invectives of this Nature; yet, if there are any who teach Doctrines which are evidently inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or who live in such a Manner as bespeaks their Disbelief and Want of all Religion, it is no Wonder that they have the Efforts of Wit and Malice, as well as the just Indignation of Truth and Virtue, to contend with.

BUT, let it once become the Endeavour of every Person distinguish'd by this Character, to form his Precepts and Example after the Pattern of the Author and the Finisher of our Faith; let every one consider, that the original Design and Establishment of their Office was to be the *Servants of the People for the sake of Christ*, to promote the Glory of God on high, Peace on Earth, and Good-will to Men: And let all of them but act according to this Sentiment in every Part of Life, and there
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can then be no Foundation for any 'Blame' or Censure. The greatest possible Advantage will thence accrue to our Religion, the good Effects of Truth and Righteousness in the World will then be very visible, and they that are thus will appear as the Brightness of the Firmament; the whole Order will derive from it the highest Honour which This Life can give them, and in the Other, they will *shine like the Stars for ever and ever.*

